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Andrew Cuomo

Andrew Mark Cuomo (/kwoomoo/; Italian: ['kwɔ:mo]; born December 6, 1957) is an American politician, author, and lawyer serving as the 56th governor of New York since 2011. A member of the Democratic Party, he was elected to the same position his father, Mario Cuomo, held for three terms. He has served as Chair of the National Governors Association since August 2020.

Born in New York City, Cuomo is a graduate of Fordham University and Albany Law School of Union University, New York. He began his career working as the campaign manager for his father, then as an assistant district attorney in New York City before entering private law practice. He founded Housing Enterprise for the Less Privileged (HELP USA) and was appointed chair of the New York City Homeless Commission, a position he held from 1990 to 1993.

In 1993, Cuomo joined the Clinton Administration as Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development in the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. From 1997 to 2001, he served as the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. In 2006, Cuomo was elected Attorney General of New York. Cuomo won the 2010 New York gubernatorial election to become Governor of New York and has been reelected twice after winning primaries against liberal challengers Zephyr Teachout (2014) and Cynthia Nixon (2018).

During his governorship, Cuomo oversaw the passage of the 2011 Marriage Equality Act, introducing same-sex marriage in New York, and the 2014 Compassionate Care Act, legalizing medical marijuana. In response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting and the 2012 Webster shooting, Cuomo signed the NY SAFE Act of 2013, the strictest gun control law in the United States. He co-founded the United States Climate Alliance, a group of states committed to fighting climate change by following the terms of the Paris Climate Accords.^[1] He also delivered Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act; a 2011 tax code that raised taxes for the wealthy and lowered taxes for the middle class; 12-week paid family leave along with a gradual increase of the state's minimum wage to \$15;^[2] and pay equity.^[3] Cuomo received national attention for his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic in New York.



Cuomo in 2017

56th Governor of New York

Incumbent

Assumed office

January 1, 2011

Lieutenant Robert Duffy

Kathy Hochul

Preceded by David Paterson

Chair of the National Governors Association

Incumbent

Assumed office

August 5, 2020

Deputy Asa Hutchinson

Preceded by Larry Hogan

Vice Chair of the National Governors Association

In office

July 26, 2019 – August 5, 2020

Preceded by Larry Hogan

Succeeded by Asa Hutchinson

64th Attorney General of New York

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January 1, 2007 – December 31, 2010

GovernorEliot SpitzerDavid Paterson**Preceded by**Eliot Spitzer**Succeeded by**Eric Schneiderman**11th United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development****In office**

January 29, 1997 – January 20, 2001

PresidentBill Clinton**Preceded by**Henry Cisneros**Succeeded by**Mel Martinez**Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for Community Planning and Development****In office**

May 28, 1993 – January 29, 1997

PresidentBill Clinton**Preceded by**Skirka Kondratas**Succeeded by**Saul Ramirez, Jr.**Personal details****Born**Andrew MarkCuomoDecember 6, 1957New York City, U.S.**Political party**Democratic**Spouse(s)**Kerry Kennedy(m. 1990; div. 2005)**Domestic partner**Sandra Lee (2005–2019)**Children**3**Parents**Mario CuomoMatilda Raffa**Relatives**Chris Cuomo(brother)Margaret Cuomo(sister)**Residence**Executive Mansion

[References](#)[External links](#)

Early life and education

Cuomo was born December 6, 1957, in the Queens borough of New York City.^[4] to lawyer and later governor of New York Mario Cuomo and Matilda (*née* Raffa).^[5] His parents were both of Italian descent; his paternal grandparents were from Nocera Inferiore and Tramonti in the Campania region of southern Italy, while his maternal grandparents were from Sicily (his grandfather from Messina).^{[5][6]} He has four siblings;^[7] his younger brother, Chris Cuomo, is a CNN journalist. His elder sister is noted radiologist Margaret Cuomo.^[8]

He graduated from St. Gerard Majella's School in 1971^[9] and Archbishop Molloy High School in 1975.^[10] He received a B.A. from Fordham University in 1979, and a J.D. from Albany Law School in 1982.^[10]

Early career

During his father's 1982 campaign for Governor, Cuomo was campaign manager, and then joined the governor's staff as one of his father's policy advisors and sometime Albany roommate,^[11] earning \$1 a year.^[12]

From 1984 to 1985, Cuomo was a New York assistant district attorney and briefly worked at the law firm of Blutrich, Falcone & Miller. He founded Housing Enterprise for the Less Privileged (HELP) in 1986 and left his law firm to run HELP full-time in 1988.^[12] From 1990 to 1993, during the administration of New York City mayor, David Dinkins, Cuomo was chair of the New York City Homeless Commission, which was responsible for developing policies to address homelessness in the city and providing more housing options.^[13]

Secretary of HUD

Andrew Cuomo was appointed to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development in 1993, a member of President Bill Clinton's administration.^[14] After the departure of Secretary Henry Cisneros at the end of Clinton's first term under the cloud of an FBI investigation,^[15] Cuomo was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate to succeed him as Secretary of HUD. Cuomo served as Secretary from January 1997 until the Clinton administration ended in 2001.^[14]

In 2000, Cuomo led HUD efforts to negotiate an agreement with the United States' handgun manufacturer Smith & Wesson. This agreement required Smith & Wesson to change the design, distribution, and marketing of guns to make them safer and to help keep them out of the hands of children and criminals.^[14] Budgets enacted during Cuomo's term contained initiatives to increase the supply of affordable housing and homeownership, and to create jobs and economic development. These included new rental assistance subsidies; reforms to integrate public housing; higher limits on mortgages insured by the Federal Housing Administration; a crackdown on housing discrimination; expanded programs to help homeless people get housing and jobs; and creation of new empowerment zones.

Education

Fordham University

(BA)

Albany Law School

(JD)

Signature**Website**

Government

website (<http://governor.ny.gov>)



Cuomo as HUD Secretary



Cuomo as HUD Secretary holding a press conference with then Treasury Secretary Larry Summers in June 2000

During Cuomo's tenure as HUD Secretary, he called for an increase in home ownership.^[16] He also pushed government-sponsored lenders Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to buy more home loans issued to poor homeowners, in an attempt to end discrimination against minorities.^[17] Some believe that this helped lead to the 2007-2010 subprime mortgage crisis.^{[16][18]} Edward J. Pinto, former chief credit officer at

Fannie Mae, said "they should have known the risks were large. Cuomo was pushing mortgage bankers to make loans and basically saying you have to offer a loan to everybody."^[16] But others disagree with the assessment that Cuomo caused the crisis. Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, said

Cuomo "was a contributor in terms of him being a cheerleader, but I don't think we can pin too much blame on him."^[16]

According to libertarian author and critic James Bovard, Cuomo was obsessed with changing HUD's image, as Cuomo declared, "The PR is the important thing I do ... Eighty percent of the battle is communications." He championed a new program called Community Builders, created without appropriation by Congress, for 800 new HUD employees with computers to be paid as much as \$100,000. In a June 16, 1999, speech, Cuomo declared that one purpose of the program was to fight against HUD's abolition. In August 1999, Community Builders distributed a letter to community groups to fight against proposed tax cuts. One HUD official declared that Community Builders were seen as "Democratic ward heelers who act as a pipeline between Democratic city officials, party leaders, and the administration and the Democratic National Committee."

In 1998, Clinton-appointed HUD inspector general Susan Gaffney testified to a Senate committee that she was the victim of "'escalating' attacks on her office by Cuomo and 'his key aides,' including cooked-up charges of racism, insubordination, malfeasance, and general dirty-dealing." In 1999, Gaffney's office concluded that "most (15 out of 19) Community Builders' goals were activities rather than actual accomplishments." and that Cuomo's initiatives "had a crippling effect on many of HUD's ongoing operations."^[19] Gaffney retired in May 2001, shortly after the department reached a \$490,000 settlement with a black employee who had accused her of racial discrimination in passing him over for a promotion.^[20]

Prior to Cuomo's tenure, HUD was routinely included on the General Accounting Office's biannual watch list of government programs whose poor management made them prone to fraud.^[21] During his time in office, two of HUD's four main departments were removed from the GAO list.^[21] In addition, the department cut 15 percent of its staff as part of a Cuomo initiative to streamline its operations.^[21]

2002 New York gubernatorial election

Cuomo first ran for the Democratic nomination for Governor of New York in 2002. He was initially the favorite for nomination and led in fund-raising and polls, but his campaign took serious damage after a gaffe when Cuomo said (in reference to the aftermath of the September 11 attacks) "Pataki stood behind the leader. He held the leader's coat. He was a great assistant to the leader. But he was not a leader. Cream rises to the top, and Rudy Giuliani rose to the top." His remarks were widely derided; even his father, former governor Mario Cuomo, later admitted it was a blunder.^[22]

On the eve of the state convention, Cuomo withdrew from consideration after concluding that he had little chance of support as opposed to the favored party candidate, State Comptroller Carl McCall.^[23] McCall went on to lose the general election to George Pataki.

New York attorney general

Election

Cuomo declared his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for New York State attorney general in 2006, and on May 30, 2006, captured the Democratic Party's endorsement, receiving 65% of the delegates. Though Cuomo won the endorsement, former New York City public advocate Mark J. Green and two-time candidate for Lieutenant Governor Charlie King, also earned places on the Democratic ballot.^[24] King dropped out of the race before the primary and endorsed Cuomo.^[25]

Cuomo won the primary with a majority of the vote, defeating his nearest opponent by over 20%. Clinching the Democratic party nomination was considered a significant rebound following his unsuccessful and unpopular 2002 gubernatorial campaign and at the nominating convention, June O'Neill, the Democratic chairwoman of St. Lawrence County, called him "New York's own Comeback Kid."^[24] He won the general election against the Republican nominee, former Westchester District attorney Jeanine Pirro on November 7, 2006, winning 58% of the vote.

Tenure

Police surveillance, 2007

On July 23, 2007, Cuomo's office admonished the Spitzer administration for ordering the State Police to keep special records of then-Senate majority leader Joseph Bruno's whereabouts when he traveled with police escorts in New York City.^[26] At the discretion of top officials of the Spitzer administration, the New York State Police created documents meant to cause political damage to Bruno.^[27] Spitzer responded by accepting responsibility and issuing an apology to Bruno.^{[26][28]}

Student loan inquiry, 2007

In 2007, Cuomo was active in a high-profile investigation into lending practices and anti-competitive relationships between student lenders and universities. Specifically, many universities steered student borrowers to a "preferred lender," which resulted in the borrowers' incurring higher interest rates. This led to changes in lending policy at many major American universities. Many universities also rebated millions of dollars in fees back to affected borrowers.^{[29][30]}

Usenet, 2008

On June 10, 2008, Cuomo announced that three major Internet service providers (Verizon Communications, Time Warner Cable, and Sprint) would "shut down major sources of online child pornography" by no longer hosting many Usenet groups. Time Warner Cable ceased offering Usenet altogether, Sprint ended access to the 18,408 newsgroups in the alt.* hierarchy, and Verizon limited its Usenet offerings to the approximately 3,000 Big 8 newsgroups. The move came after Cuomo's office located 88 different newsgroups to which child pornography had been posted.^{[31][32][33]}

2008 Obama remarks

In 2008, Cuomo said of the Democratic Party candidate Barack Obama, who was running against Hillary Clinton, the candidate Cuomo supported: "You can't shuck and jive at a press conference." Cuomo received criticism from some for his use of the phrase. Roland Martin of CNN said that "'shuckin' and jivin'" have long been words used as a negative assessment of African Americans, along the lines of a 'foot-shufflin' Negro."^[34]



Cuomo with Representative Gary Ackerman in October 2008

Corruption and fraud investigations, 2009

Cuomo investigated a corruption scandal, "fraudulent scheme to extract kickbacks", which involved New York investigators, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and attorneys general in dozens of states.^[35]

Also in 2009, Cuomo launched a suit against the United Homeless Organization, a New York charity. He charged that the majority of the group's income was not used to provide services to the homeless, but was diverted to the founders for unrelated personal expenses.^[36] In 2010, Judge Barbara R. Kapnick granted the judgement and forced the group to disband.^[37]

Potential U.S. Senate appointment

After Hillary Clinton became President Obama's choice for U.S. secretary of state, then-New York governor David Paterson was charged with appointing a temporary replacement until a special election. Cuomo was seen as a leading contender for this appointment.^{[38][39]} Caroline Kennedy (who is a first cousin of Cuomo's ex-wife) was another leading contender, but withdrew for personal reasons two days before Paterson was set to announce his choice, leaving Cuomo and U.S. representative Kirsten Gillibrand as the most likely appointees.^{[39][40]} On January 23, Paterson announced he would appoint Gillibrand to the U.S. Senate.^[41]

Gubernatorial elections

2010

On September 18, 2009, advisors to President Barack Obama informed Governor David Paterson that the president believed he should withdraw his 2010 gubernatorial candidacy, stepping aside for "popular Attorney General Andrew Cuomo."^[42] On January 23, 2010, the New York Daily News reported that

Cuomo would announce plans for a gubernatorial campaign at the end of March.^[43] Later reports indicated Cuomo would announce his gubernatorial campaign coinciding with the state Democratic Convention in late May.^[44] On May 22, 2010, Cuomo announced his run for governor in a video posted to his campaign website. Cuomo announced his choice for lieutenant governor on May 26, 2010: Mayor of Rochester, Robert Duffy.^[45]

In the November 2, 2010, general election, Cuomo faced Republican Carl Paladino, a Buffalo-based businessman who had been heavily supported by the Tea Party movement. Cuomo won the election for governor by a landslide, winning 62.6% of the vote. Paladino performed strongly in his native Buffalo area, while Cuomo performed well in the eastern part of the state, as well as downstate.^[46]



Election results by county

New York gubernatorial general election results, 2010 ^[47]					
Party	Candidate	Running mate	Votes	Percentage	Swing
Democratic	Andrew Cuomo		2,609,465	56.52%	▼ 1.82%
Working Families	Andrew Cuomo		154,835	3.35%	▲ 0.05%
Independence	Andrew Cuomo		146,576	3.17%	▼ 0.89%
Total	Andrew Cuomo	Robert Duffy	2,910,876	63.05%	▼ 2.65%
Republican	Carl Paladino		1,289,817	27.94%	▲ 4.40%
Conservative	Carl Paladino		232,215	5.03%	▲ 1.44%
Taxpayers	Carl Paladino		25,825	0.56%	
Total	Carl Paladino	Greg Edwards	1,547,857	33.53%	▲ 6.41%
Green	Howie Hawkins	Gloria Mattera	59,906	1.30%	▲ 0.41%
Libertarian	Warren Redlich	Alden Link	48,359	1.05%	▲ 0.74%
Rent Is Too Damn High	Jimmy McMillan	None	41,129	0.89%	▲ 0.61%
Freedom	Charles Barron	Eva M. Doyle	24,571	0.53%	
Anti-Prohibition	Kristin M. Davis	Tanya Gendelman	20,421	0.44%	
	Scattering		4,836	0.10%	N/A
		Majority	1,363,019	29.52%	▼ 9.06%
		Totals	4,616,836	100.00%	
Democratic Hold					

In addition to the parties fielding candidates, New York's electoral fusion laws allow parties to cross-endorse candidates. The Independence Party and Working Families Party cross-endorsed Andrew Cuomo, while the Conservative Party and Taxpayers Party cross-endorsed Carl Paladino. The Independence Party line received 146,648 votes (5.0% of Cuomo's total, and 3.2% of the statewide total) and the Working Families line received 154,853 votes (5.3% and 3.4%), with the Democratic line receiving the remaining 2,610,220 votes (89.6% and 56.5%). The Conservative line received 232,281 votes (15.0% of Paladino's total, and 5.0% of the statewide total) and the Taxpayers line received 25,821 votes (1.5% and 0.6%), with the Republican line receiving the remaining 1,290,082 votes (83.3% and 27.1%).

2014

Cuomo sought reelection in 2014, with former U.S. Representative Kathy Hochul as his new running mate. On March 5, 2014, Westchester County executive Rob Astorino announced that he would run on the Republican ticket against Cuomo for governor.^[48] Law professors Zephyr Teachout and Tim Wu challenged the Cuomo–Hochul ticket in the Democratic primary election^{[49][50]}—capturing 34% of the vote on the gubernatorial line (Wu drew 40.1% as lieutenant governor^[51]).^[52] On November 4, 2014, Cuomo was re-elected for a second term with 54% of the vote,^{[53][54]} while Astorino received 40.6% of the vote.^[55]

New York Democratic gubernatorial primary results, 2014 ^[56]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	
Democratic	<u>Andrew Cuomo</u>	361,380	62.92	
Democratic	Zephyr Teachout	192,210	33.47	
Democratic	Randy Credico	20,760	3.61	
	Total votes	594,287	100.00	

New York Democratic lieutenant gubernatorial primary results, 2014 ^[56]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	
Democratic	<u>Kathy Hochul</u>	329,089	60.20	
Democratic	Tim Wu	217,614	39.80	
	Total votes	546,703	100.00	

Despite a low voter turnout, Cuomo won the general election by a comfortable margin; however, his margin of victory was smaller than it had been in his 2010 victory. Astorino won most of upstate New York, but was overwhelmed in New York City. Cuomo was sworn in for second term as Governor.

New York gubernatorial general election results, 2014 ^[57]					
Party	Candidate	Running mate	Votes	Percentage	Swing
Democratic	<u>Andrew Cuomo</u>		1,811,672	47.08%	▼ 9.44%
Working Families	<u>Andrew Cuomo</u>		126,244	3.22%	▼ 0.13%
Independence	<u>Andrew Cuomo</u>		77,762	2.02%	▼ 1.15%
Women's Equality	<u>Andrew Cuomo</u>		53,802	1.41%	N/A

Total	Andrew Cuomo	Kathy Hochul	2,069,480	54.19%	▼ 8.86%
Republican	Rob Astorino		1,234,951	32.59%	▲ 4.65%
Conservative	Rob Astorino		250,634	6.60%	▲ 1.57%
Stop-Common-Core	Rob Astorino		51,294	1.39%	N/A
Total	Rob Astorino	Christopher Moss	1,536,879	40.24%	▲ 6.71%
Green	Howie Hawkins	Brian Jones	184,419	4.86%	▲ 3.56%
Libertarian	Michael McDermott	Chris Edes	16,967	0.42%	▼ 0.63%
Sapient	Steven Cohn	Bobby Kalottee	4,963	0.13%	N/A
	Scattering		6,378	0.19%	▲ 0.09%
		Majority	480,605	13.26%	▼ 16.74%
		Totals	3,930,310	100.00%	

Democratic Hold**2018**

Cuomo was challenged in the primary from the left by actress-and-activist Cynthia Nixon. She criticized him as having failed to fix the New York City Subway following his declaration of the 2017 New York City transit crisis, as well as his failure to protect undocumented immigrants, legalize recreational marijuana,^[58] or create a single payer healthcare system.^[59] When debating Nixon, Cuomo countered her argument on the subways by pointing out that the system is owned by New York City, though past administrations agree it is the governor's role.^{[60][61][62]} An analysis conducted by New York City comptroller Scott Stringer revealed that New York City pays for 70 percent of subway repair costs.^[62]

Cuomo defeated Nixon, 65.53%-34.47%.

New York Democratic gubernatorial primary results, 2018 ^[63]			
Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Democratic	Andrew Cuomo (incumbent)	1,021,160	65.53%
Democratic	Cynthia Nixon	537,192	34.47%
		Total votes	1,490,753
			100%

New York Democratic lieutenant gubernatorial primary results, 2018 ^[63]			
Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Democratic	Kathy Hochul (incumbent)	733,591	53.3%
Democratic	Jumaane Williams	641,633	46.7%
		Total votes	1,375,224
			100%

On November 6, 2018, the Cuomo-Hochul ticket defeated the Molinaro-Killian ticket by a margin of 59.6%-36.2%.^[64]

New York gubernatorial general election results, 2018 ^[64]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
Democratic	Andrew Cuomo	3,424,416	56.16%	+8.64%
Working Families	Andrew Cuomo	114,478	1.88%	-1.43%
Independence	Andrew Cuomo	68,713	1.13%	-0.91%
Women's Equality	Andrew Cuomo	27,733	0.45%	-0.96%
Total	Andrew Cuomo/Kathy Hochul (incumbent)	3,635,340	59.62%	+5.43%
Republican	Marc Molinaro	1,926,485	31.60%	-0.79%
Conservative	Marc Molinaro	253,624	4.16%	-2.41%
Reform	Marc Molinaro	27,493	0.45%	N/A
Total	Marc Molinaro/Julie Killian	2,207,602	36.21%	-4.10%
Green	Howie Hawkins/Jia Lee	103,946	1.70%	-3.14%
Libertarian	Larry Sharpe/Andrew Hollister	95,033	1.56%	+1.12%
SAM	Stephanie Miner/Michael Volpe	55,441	0.91%	N/A
		Total votes	'6,097,362'	'100.0%'
Democratic hold				

Governor of New York

Cuomo took the gubernatorial oath of office at 12:01 a.m. on January 1, 2011, succeeding David Paterson.^{[65][66]} During his first year as governor, Cuomo worked to pass an on-time budget^{[67][68]} that cut spending without raising taxes,^{[69][70]} made a new deal with a large state-employee union,^[71] signed ethics reform legislation,^[72] passed a property tax cap,^[73] worked to enact a same-sex marriage bill with bipartisan support,^{[74][75]} and restructured New York's tax code.^{[76][77]}

There was media speculation about a possible presidential run, either in 2016 or 2020.^{[78][79]} Several reports indicated that Cuomo supported the Independent Democratic Conference until its dissolution and defeat in 2018 in part to appear more moderate for an eventual presidential bid.^{[80][81][82][83]}

For his 2018 re-election bid, Cuomo accepted being on top of the ballot line for the Independence Party, a list that featured numerous Republicans, including ardent Trump supporters.^[84]

In an August 15, 2018, anti-sex trafficking bill-signing event, Cuomo said: "We're not gonna make America great again. It was never that great. We have not reached greatness. We will reach greatness when every American is fully engaged."^[85] The assembled audience of Cuomo's supporters booed.^[86]

In a February 2019 opinion poll, Cuomo's approval rating dropped to 43 percent, the lowest of his tenure as governor, and a full 50% said they disapproved.^[87] The poll showed an eight percent drop from January 2019; it was taken after Cuomo signed several pieces of progressive legislation, including an



With former US President Bill Clinton (center left) in 2012

expansion of abortion rights and access and stricter gun laws, suggesting that the legislation may have upset certain voters and contributed to the drop; however, the majority of voters agreed with his position on both issues.^[88] By early 2020, Cuomo's favorability rating was up to 77 percent, a record high.^[89]

Coronavirus response

In 2020, Cuomo received widespread praise from epidemiologists for his handling of the evolving COVID-19 pandemic in New York State, which includes a state-wide lockdown and a shutdown of non-essential businesses in an effort to help flatten the curve of the virus. Like many other national leaders, however, Cuomo also received criticism for failing to grasp the gravity of the pandemic before its risks were fully visible to the American public.^{[90][91][92]}

On March 28, 2020, Cuomo threatened Rhode Island with a lawsuit over a new state quarantine policy of stopping incoming New Yorkers to enforce quarantine.^{[93][94]}

On March 25, 2020, Cuomo and the New York State Department of Health issued an advisory requiring the admission of patients to nursing homes who test positive for the coronavirus and barred testing prospective nursing home patients. This order was revoked on May 10 after widespread criticism from medical experts. By then, as many as 4,500 COVID-19 infected patients had been sent to nursing homes in NY state. Over 6,000 New York state nursing home residents have died of COVID as of June 2020.^[95]

Corporate incentives

Cuomo has supported providing tax and other incentives to attract business to locate in New York State.^{[96][97]} He even joked in 2018 that he would be willing to change his name to "Amazon Cuomo" if Amazon located their "Amazon HQ2" in the state.^[98] His strong support for New York City's bid to become the home of Amazon's HQ2 faced criticism based on arguments that the costs to the state outweighed the possible benefits.^{[99][100]} Amazon decided on two "major corporate outposts" in New York City and Arlington, Virginia—instead of a single second headquarters,^[101] before bowing out of the former under local pressure.

Criminal justice

In August 2017, the Cuomo administration awarded more than \$7 million — financed with money from large bank settlements — in grants to New York colleges to offer courses to New York prisoners.^[102] In January 2018, Cuomo proposed reforms that would "reduce delays during trials, ban asset seizures in cases where there has been no conviction and make it easier for former convicts to get a job after leaving prison."^[103] He also called for an end to cash bail for minor crimes.^[103]

Under Cuomo's tenure, he granted commutations to fewer prisoners than many previous Republican and Democratic New York governors.^[104] Cuomo commuted a total of nine sentences.^[104] Cuomo pardoned 140 adults who were convicted of nonviolent felonies as 16- and 17-year-olds, but had served their sentences.^[104] He pardoned 18 others who had served their sentences for nonviolent felonies but were exposed to deportation due to their criminal record.^[104]

Gun control

On January 15, 2013, Cuomo signed into law the first state gun control bill to pass after the December 14, 2012, Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in neighboring Connecticut.^[105] The NY SAFE Act was described as the toughest gun control law in the United States.^[106] The act came under criticism, and the National Rifle Association called it draconian. The New York State Sheriffs' Association issued a statement supporting tougher penalties for illegal use of firearms, but criticizing several aspects of the legislation, including a magazine limit of seven rounds and a "too broad" definition of assault weapons.^[107]

On July 5, 2013, Cuomo signed an amendment to the NY SAFE Act that exempts retired police officers from some of the act's ownership restrictions.^[108]

Hurricane Sandy

After Hurricane Sandy in October 2012, Cuomo allowed New York voters, via a specific provision aimed at accommodating those displaced, to cast provisional ballots for the 2012 election anywhere in the state.^[109] He also appointed a commission to examine the responses of New York utilities to damage caused by the storm.^[110]

Controversy ensued when the Cuomo administration used \$140 million, including \$40 million of federal disaster relief funds, to pay for the broadcast of national TV ads promoting "New York" slogans outside New York in an attempt to attract new business investment to the state.^{[111][112]} Many have been critical of the effort, including former New York governor Eliot Spitzer, who called the ads "fluff" and "a waste of taxpayer money".^[111]

Hydraulic fracturing

In June 2012, the Cuomo administration said it was considering lifting a state ban on the practice of hydraulic fracturing (also known as "fracking")^[113] to stimulate the economy in upstate New York. But critics said that fracking upstate could contaminate the water supply of New York City, New Jersey and parts of Pennsylvania.^{[114][115]} Following a long-awaited study started years earlier, New York State health officials cited "significant public health risks" associated with fracking, and on December 17, 2014, the Cuomo administration announced a ban on hydraulic fracturing in New York State.^[116]

Israel

In solidarity with Israel, Cuomo announced an executive order against the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement. Cuomo tweeted: "If you boycott Israel, New York State will boycott you."^[117]

Medical marijuana



Cuomo leading the 2018 New York City March For Our Lives rally



Cuomo in New York City in October 2012

In January 2014, Cuomo announced [118] the introduction of a medical marijuana bill. In July of that year, New York became the 23rd state[119] to allow the medical use of marijuana when Cuomo signed the Compassionate Care Act.[120]

New York City Subway

In June 2017, after a series of subway disasters, Cuomo declared a "state of emergency" for the New York City Subway system.[121] According to *The New York Times*, a series of New York City mayors and New York governors, including Cuomo, were partly at fault for the worsening quality of the subway system and inflated construction costs.[121] Under the Cuomo administration, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority repeatedly diverted tax revenues earmarked for the subways, paid for services that there was no need for and spent on subway projects that did not boost service or reliability.[121] As a result, the MTA was saddled with debt and could not undertake investments into overhauling outdated and inefficient subway infrastructure.[121] Cuomo also directed the MTA to spend on projects that the heads of the MTA did not consider to be priorities.[121] One reason why the New York City subway system is so expensive is due to exorbitant labor costs; according to several M.T.A. officials who were involved in negotiating labor contracts, Cuomo pressured the MTA to accept labor union contracts that were extremely favorable to workers.[121] *The New York Times* noted that Cuomo was closely aligned with the union in question and had received \$165,000 in campaign contributions from it.[121]



The inaugural ride of the Second Avenue Subway with Cuomo on December 31, 2016

The New York Times reported, "Cuomo had steered clear of the M.T.A. during his first years in office, but in his second term he took an intense interest. He placed aides within the organization and, in an unusual move, made some report directly to him. He badgered transit leaders about the construction of the Second Avenue subway on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. And over the objections of some board members, he canceled several M.T.A. capital projects to make room for his own priorities. According to high-ranking current and former M.T.A. officials, the moves interfered with the authority's plans to address the rising delays."^[121]

Public college and university tuition

On April 18, 2017, Cuomo signed the New York State 2018 fiscal year budget. It included the Excelsior Scholarship, a provision that families making less than \$125,000 in 2019 could have free tuition at all SUNY and CUNY universities,[122][123] though some education experts including Sara Goldrick-Rab say it won't help the poorest students and that the requirement that recipients live and work in New York after graduating is counter-productive.[124]

Public employees

On July 16, 2011, Cuomo finalized a five-year deal with the Public Employees Federation to end pay raises, implement furlough days, and require additional contributions to health insurance accounts.[125] In an interview with *The New York Times*, he stated his top goal in 2012 is the reduction of public employee pensions.^[126]

Public housing

In the winter of 2018, Cuomo responded to a class-action lawsuit brought against the New York City Housing Authority by attorney Jim Walden on behalf of a group of public housing tenants. The suit was the first of its kind and called upon NYCHA to immediately address decrepit and unhealthy conditions in public housing units across New York City.^[127] At the invitation of Walden, Cuomo toured a public housing project in March.^[128] By early April, Cuomo appointed an independent monitor to oversee NYCHA on an emergency basis.^[129] The move broadened the ever-widening rift between NYC mayor Bill DeBlasio and Cuomo.^{[130][131]}

Remarks about right-wing conservatives

In a January 17, 2014, interview with Susan Arbetter on WNYC's *The Capital Pressroom*, Cuomo stated:

[New York Republicans] are searching to define their soul, that's what's going on. Is the Republican party in this state a moderate party or is it an extreme conservative party? ... The Republican Party candidates are running against the SAFE Act — it was voted for by moderate Republicans who run the Senate! Their problem is not me and the Democrats; their problem is themselves. Who are they? Are they these extreme conservatives who are right-to-life, pro-assault-weapon, anti-gay? Is that who they are? Because if that's who they are and they're the extreme conservatives, they have no place in the state of New York, because that's not who New Yorkers are. If they're moderate Republicans like in the Senate right now, who control the Senate — moderate Republicans have a place in their state. George Pataki was governor of this state as a moderate Republican, but not what you're hearing from them on the far right.^[132]

This remark received a major reaction in the conservative media. Radio host Glenn Beck wrote a letter to the governor regarding the remarks from the interview.^[133] Fox News contributor and radio/TV show host Sean Hannity mentioned moving with all of his assets out of the state if the governor did not apologize for his remarks.^[134] Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, the Archbishop of New York, said during a radio broadcast that the governor's remarks were "most unfortunate at best. Are there pro-lifers who are extremist? Yes, there are. But I think they are a distinct minority."^[135]

The New York State Democratic Committee, which is headed by Cuomo, supported his remarks and reiterated them in a May 2014 statement responding to a speech by Rob Astorino, who was running against him in the 2014 gubernatorial election: "Tea Party Republicans have done enough damage in Washington, today's speech made it abundantly clear that we don't need them here in New York."^[136]

Same-sex marriage

In keeping with a campaign promise, Cuomo signed the *Marriage Equality Act*, introducing same-sex marriage, on June 24, 2011, following an "intense public and private lobbying campaign", and later called for all states to do the same.^[137] Cuomo was lauded for his efforts to pass same-sex marriage legislation.^{[138][139][140]} One prominent advocate stated that "for gay Americans, Mr. Cuomo was "the only national politician with hero status."^[139] Following the passage of the Act, Cuomo was criticized for describing the viewpoints of opponents as "anti-American".^{[141][142]} On July 25, 2011, a lawsuit was filed in the New York Supreme Court seeking an injunction against the Act, alleging corruption and violations

of the law in the process of passing the bill.^[143] The trial court initially held that the plaintiffs' case could proceed, but the decision was reversed on appeal.^[144]

Cuomo ordered a boycott of Indiana and North Carolina to protest their legislation on LGBT issues.^[117]



Cuomo at NYC Pride March in 2013

START-UP NY

In July 2016, the Empire State Development Corporation, a state agency, released a report indicating that the state's flagship business tax incentive program, called START-UP NY, had generated 408 jobs since its inception in 2014. Ads promoting the program have cost at least \$53 million.^[145] The START-UP NY annual report was delayed three months in 2016, leading some lawmakers, such as Assemblyman Schimmoeller, to call the delays "curious".^[146]

Taxes

Cuomo was praised for his 2011 restructuring of the New York State tax code.^{[147][148][149]} He was also criticized for including tax increases for high earners,^{[150][151]} and for allegedly requesting a unanimous Assembly vote in favor of the proposal and threatening to campaign against Assembly members who voted "no"^[152] – a charge he denied.^[152] Cuomo also received criticism from voices on the left who felt that the tax reform was insufficient.^[151]

Voting rights

In April 2018, Cuomo announced that he would restore the voting rights of parolees through an executive order.^[153] He said that he would consider restoring the voting rights of all parolees (more than 35,000), and would also enfranchise new parolees throughout his term.^[153]

Women's issues and abortion

In 2013, Cuomo called for the passage of a Women's Equality Act.^[154] The Women's Equality Act included 10 component bills affecting issues such as domestic violence, human trafficking, and pregnancy discrimination.^[154] The tenth bill of the Women's Equality Act was the Reproductive Health Act,^[155] which would have "enshrine[d] in state law existing federal protections for abortion rights," "shift[ed] the state's abortion law from the criminal code to the health care laws," and "[made] it clearer that licensed health care practitioners as well as physicians could perform abortions."^[156] During his 2013 State of the State address, Cuomo said, "Enact a Reproductive Health Act because it is her body, it is her choice. Because it's her body, it's her choice. Because it's her body, it's her choice."^[154] The New York State Assembly passed the Women's Equality Act on June 20, 2013.^[157] The Republican leadership of the New York State Senate expressed support for the nine non-abortion-related planks of the Women's Equality Act, but objected to the Reproductive Health Act and expressed unwillingness to allow a vote on it.^[158]

On the final day of the 2013 legislative session, following the Senate Republican Conference's continued refusal to vote on the full Women's Equality Act, Senator Jeff Klein, leader of the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), offered the abortion plank of the Act as a hostile amendment to another bill.^[159] The amendment was defeated by a narrow margin of 32–31; all 30 Senate Republicans voted against the abortion amendment, as did Democratic Sens. Ruben Diaz and Simcha Felder.^[159] The Senate proceeded to pass the nine non-abortion-related planks of the Women's Equality Act as separate bills, and the 2013 legislative session came to an end without any portion of the WEA becoming law.^[160]

"[After] the 2014 election season was over, with Cuomo victorious, the governor and his lieutenant governor Kathy Hochul both declared the abortion plank of the act officially dormant, if not dead."^[161] In 2015, the non-abortion-related Women's Equality Act bills passed both houses of the State Legislature.^[161] In October 2015, Cuomo signed eight of the 10 Women's Equality Act bills into law; the abortion rights bill was not among them.^[162]

On January 22, 2019, Cuomo signed the 2019 version of the Reproductive Health Act, which passed days after Democrats took control of the state Senate.^[163] Cuomo ordered One World Trade Center and other landmarks to be lit in pink to celebrate the bill's passage.^{[164][165]} Cuomo's signing and the lighting of the World Trade Center building sparked intense criticism from conservatives.^[166] The Catholic cardinal Timothy Dolan criticized Cuomo over the Reproductive Health Act.^[167]

Controversies

Appointee donations controversy

On his first day in office, Cuomo renewed an executive order signed by Eliot Spitzer which prohibited Governors of New York from receiving donations from gubernatorial appointees.^[168] A February 2018 investigation by *The New York Times*, however, revealed that the Cuomo administration had quietly reinterpreted the order, and that Cuomo had collected \$890,000 from 24 of his appointees, as well as \$1.3 million from the spouses, children and businesses of appointees.^[168] Some donations were made to Cuomo just days after the donor was appointed.^[168]

In March 2018, *The New York Times* reported that Cuomo had rewritten the disclaimer language on his campaign website for the executive order barring donations from appointees.^[169] The website added two caveats whereby some gubernatorial appointees are allowed to donate to the governor, which *The Times* said could potentially lead to more donations from appointees to the governor.^[169] The Cuomo campaign returned a \$2,500 donation from one appointee who was in violation of the new disclaimer, but still retains the approximately \$890,000 raised from other appointees.^[169]

Hurricane Sandy

Controversy ensued when his administration used \$140 million, including \$40 million of federal disaster relief funds, to pay for the broadcast of national TV ads promoting "New New York" slogans outside New York in an attempt to attract new business investment to the state.^{[111][112]} Many have been critical of the effort, including former New York governor Eliot Spitzer, who called the ads "fluff" and "a waste of taxpayer money".^[111]

Independent Democratic Conference (IDC)

In 2014, Politico reported that Cuomo had been actively involved in the formation of the Independent Democratic Conference three years earlier, which gave control of the state senate to Republicans.^[170] He has been accused of failing to bridge the rift between the IDC and the Democratic caucus in the Senate.^[171]

Official corruption

In July 2014, it was reported that the Moreland Commission, a committee established by Cuomo to root out corruption in politics, was directed away from investigations that could be politically damaging.^[172] Cuomo later abruptly and controversially disbanded the commission.^[172] Federal prosecutors in Manhattan launched an inquiry into Cuomo's dealings with the anticorruption panel and concluded that "after a thorough investigation," there was "insufficient evidence to prove a federal crime."^[173]

In September 2016, Joseph Percoco, a close friend and former top aide to Cuomo, was indicted as part of a bribery investigation into the Buffalo Billion.^{[174][175][176]} He had worked for Cuomo in both Washington and Albany and had managed his 2010 and 2014 gubernatorial campaigns and has been described as "the governor's enforcer and a member of his inner circle".^{[177][178]} Cuomo had previously referred to him as a brother, and as Mario Cuomo's "third son".^[179] Todd Howe, a lobbyist and former Cuomo aide, was also indicted, along with several developers who were major donors to Cuomo and other state politicians.^{[174][175]} Cuomo was not accused of wrongdoing.^{[175][176]}

In March 2018, a federal jury in Manhattan convicted Percoco on felony charges of solicitation of bribes and honest services fraud for over \$315,000 in bribes he took from two people seeking official favors on behalf of an energy company, Competitive Power Ventures Inc. Prosecutors framed him as Cuomo's "right-hand man."^{[180][181][182]} Following Percoco's conviction, Cuomo released a statement declaring that he would respect the jury's verdict and that "there is no tolerance for any violation of the public trust."^{[183][184][185]}

Electoral history

Personal life

Cuomo married Kerry Kennedy, the seventh child of Robert F. Kennedy and Ethel Skakel Kennedy, on June 9, 1990. They have three daughters: twins, Cara Ethel Kennedy-Cuomo and Mariah Matilda Kennedy-Cuomo (born 1995), and Michaela Andrea Kennedy-Cuomo (born 1997).^{[186][187]} They separated in 2003, and divorced in 2005.

He began dating Food Network host Sandra Lee in 2005 and the couple moved in together in 2011. The two resided in Westchester County, New York.^{[188][186][187][189]} On September 25, 2019, the couple announced that they had ended their relationship.^[190] As of the fall of 2019, Cuomo is living in the New York State Executive Mansion in Albany on full-time basis.

On July 4, 2015, Cuomo presided over the wedding ceremony of his long-time friend Billy Joel to his fourth wife, Alexis Roderick.^[191]

Cuomo is a Roman Catholic.^[192] According to *The New York Times*, Cuomo's positions in favor of abortion rights and same-sex marriage (and his cohabitation with Lee without marrying her)^[193] contrary to church teachings have "become a lightning rod in a decades-old culture war between

conservative Catholics and those, like Mr. Cuomo, who disagree with the church's positions on various issues, including abortion and divorce."^[192]

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External links

- Governor Andrew M. Cuomo (<http://www.governor.ny.gov/>) official New York government site
- Andrew Cuomo for Governor (<http://andrewcuomo.com/>)
- Andrew Cuomo (https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/New_York/Government/Executive/Governor_Andrew_Cuomo) at Curlie
- Appearances (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?andrewcuomo>) on C-SPAN
- Profile (<https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/45083>) at Vote Smart

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